



DO ANCIENT EGYPTIANS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?

The Reception of Ancient Egypt in Science Fiction

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ABSTRACTS

⚡ AncientEgyptiansDream.wordpress.com ⚡

James Baillie

University of Vienna

Beneath The Necron Masks: Ancient Egypt in Sci-Fi Game Mechanics

Egyptian evocations in science-fiction exist in computer games as much as anywhere in sci-fi: games are a key context through which modern science-fiction is experienced and can contain a wide range of cues to evoke particular implied settings or analogies. Examinations of historical material in games of all kinds are, consequently, an increasingly common academic pursuit. However, these analyses frequently focus largely on aesthetic representations, which are only one part of the ludic experience. Equally important in representations or evocations of imagined pasts are the models of game rules and AI that define arguments about how the world works – to take the common game use of warfare, what a soldier looks like is an aesthetic question, but the effect of war on that soldier and the world around them is largely a mechanics question.

In this paper, I will seek to briefly explore whether Egyptian-inspired science fiction in games, focusing on the Necrons of the Dawn of War games but considering other titles too in passing, can be considered mechanically rather than just aesthetically Egyptian. This will focus mainly on whether particular special rules, unit types and attributes, and other similar structural mechanics of the game help in reflecting popularly held ideas and tropes about ancient Egyptian culture and society, especially ideas like an emphasis on slave underclasses, pharaonic autocracy and supremacy, fascination with death and preservation, and the association between ancient Egypt and technological advancement, all of which feature heavily in popular understandings of Egypt.

James Baillie is a digital humanities scholar, medieval historian and PhD student at the University of Vienna, where his primary work is on the prosopography of the high medieval Caucasus. He is also interested in representations of history in games: he teaches a seminar on medievalism in computer games, have run a workshop entitled Coding Medieval Worlds on much the same topic, and also develop hobby computer and tabletop games in his spare time.

Ilaria Cariddi

Università degli Studi di Firenze

Pyramids, Obelisks, and a Technological Armour: The Fictionality of Ancient Egypt in *Tomb Raider*

The highly acclaimed videogame series *Tomb Raider* has prominently featured ancient Egyptian archaeological locations since its first 1996 instalment (and its 2007 remake *Anniversary*), while its fourth, *The Last Revelation* (1999), is completely set in Egypt, with a rich range of historically varied sceneries, from the Valley of the Kings to the Karnak temple complex, the underwater ruins of Alexandria, and, obviously, the Giza plateau. As per usual in the series, the plot of both games relies on alternative archaeology theories, out-of-place artifacts, superhuman entities with science-fiction-like powers, and myths reimaged with a touch of technology – even though, in the case of *The Last Revelation*, there is a conscious effort of inserting these elements in a believable lore, and for offering less conventional experiences of ancient Egypt, as with the Ptolemaic reconstructions. The present contribution is aimed to discuss by what means these games

build on mainstream sci-fi and fantastic preconceptions on pharaonic religion, knowledge, craftsmanship and aesthetic. A study on the reasons why and how this medium perpetuates the undying need for 'more' than traditional archaeology, and its challenging balance between accuracy and the allure of adventure, can lead to several considerations on the role of videogames in the access to antiquity, and the weight of science fiction in the modern receptions of ancient Egypt.

Ilaria Cariddi defended her PhD in Science of Antiquities with a dissertation in Egyptology in 2018 at Università Ca' Foscari. She is currently Research Fellow at the Istituto Papirologico 'G. Vitelli', Università degli Studi di Firenze, and Teacher of Middle Egyptian for beginners at the Centro Nazionale di Studi Classici 'GrecoLatinoVivo'. Her current project is entitled 'Restoration, archiving and study of the Hieroglyphic, Hieratic and Demotic papyri of the collection of the "Papiri della Società Italiana" (PSI), from the Tebnyin temple library'.

Madeleine Chawner

The Extraordinary Adventures of Ancient Egypt in a Steampunk World

Tim Powers' book *The Anubis Gates* (1983) establishes an ancient Egyptian footing in the world of steampunk fiction, where magicians establish a system of time-travelling gates, to restore the ancient Egyptian gods to power. This has become a classic steampunk novel.

I plan to examine two more recent examples of Ancient Egypt in the steampunk genre. The first is *Timeless*, by Gail Carriger (2012), set in a Victorian steampunk world. Here the heroine sets off on a quest to Cairo, to answer a summons from an ancient vampire queen, who turns out to be a human/vampire/cyborg hybrid, and none other than Hatshepsut herself.

The second is *The Extraordinary Adventures of Adele Blanc Sec*, a film directed by Luc Besson (2010). The eponymous heroine is an Edwardian adventurer/journalist in Paris, who goes to Egypt to 'borrow' the mummy of Ramses II's physician, in the hope that he can use his advanced medical/technological skills, and save her sister, who has been given up on by the French medical profession.

Both pieces are apparently frivolous, but they raise questions. Both regard the ancient Egyptians as having advanced technologies that can solve problems that contemporary technology cannot. One resolution is successful; but the other exposes the hubris of blindly using technology to achieve a beneficial goal, without foreseeing horrific consequences. Both use steampunk and ancient Egypt to question an almost religious devotion to science, and to look back to a time of earlier lost wisdom. I intend to investigate these themes from the perspective of an ancient Egyptian technocracy, and steampunk receptions of it – what does that tell us about us and about them?

Madeleine Chawner has an MA in Classical Studies from the Open University, as well as a Diploma in Egyptology from Birkbeck College. She studies classical receptions in modern popular culture, especially favouring Ancient Greek mythology, and all things Ancient Egyptian.

Marleen De Meyer

KU Leuven & Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo

No Two Ways About It: Dayr al-Barsha Finds Favour in Fiction

On October 11, 2020, a new novel titled *The Book of Two Ways* by Jodi Picoult entered as #1 on the New York Times Bestseller List. The story centres on a woman who sees her life flash before her eyes during a plane crash. Except, it is not her real life, but the life she missed out on when she decided not to pursue a career in Egyptology at a younger age, ‘the road not taken.’ The idea of diverging life paths becomes intertwined with *The Book of Two Ways*, an actual ancient Egyptian composition that occurs on Middle Kingdom coffins from Dayr al-Barsha. This leads the protagonist to the site of Dayr al-Barsha and the ongoing fieldwork there. Contrary to how Egyptology is generally pitched in literature, namely at high-profile sites and during the ‘age of the great discoveries’, this is a rare case of a novel focusing on a modern day excavation at a site that is not well known to the general public. Coached by Yale Egyptologists who inject the novel both with Egyptological facts, as well as with fabricated fiction (e.g. fictional hieratic inscriptions), Picoult paints a picture of Egyptology that will feel genuine to the layman, but that to the specialist is riddled with fantasy. This paper, presented by someone who has excavated at Dayr al-Barsha for many years, will evaluate how this work of fiction centred on a real world scientific project gives new meaning to the term ‘science fiction’.

Marleen De Meyer is co-director of the Belgian Archaeological Mission to Dayr al-Barsha in Middle Egypt, and assistant director for Egyptology and Archaeology at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo. She is also a postdoctoral researcher on a project about the history of Egyptology in Belgium, and an avid amateur of ancient Egypt in popular culture.

Frances Foster

University of Cambridge

Shabti Robots and Hieroglyphic Spells: Rick Riordan’s Egyptians

Young people often first encounter ancient Egypt in primary school, where they are fascinated and disgusted by mummification. The fantastical images of mummies and other artefacts, the strangeness of hieroglyphic writing and magical stories about Egyptian afterlife rituals all hold rich potential for children’s literature. Popular images of ancient Egypt appear in many children’s science-fiction texts, often capitalising on the supernatural and fantastic potential of the material, such as Andre Norton’s *Star Ka’at*, in which cats are extra-terrestrial creatures.

Rick Riordan is best known for his middle-grade Percy Jackson fantasies, in which the Greek gods are alive in the modern world, but his spin-off series *The Kane Chronicles* is set in the same universe with an Egyptian focus. Riordan transposes the Egyptian gods, pharaohs and world-creation legends into the present day, reframing his formula to fit his material. Riordan’s books are fast-paced adventures, with weird events on almost every page, but closely engaging with the ancient material. *The Kane Chronicles* focus on ancient artefacts (always imbued with magical powers), language (particularly hieroglyphs which ‘turn words into reality’) and stories of the gods and pharaohs, which provide an overall narrative structure. Shabtis become mystical robots, the Duat holds secret locker spaces, and museums become sites of violent magical combat. But images of Egypt are as powerful as the ancient materials and Riordan presents the modern world as a global Egypt. I will examine how Riordan transforms Egyptian materials (artefacts, culture and reception) to construct a modern ancient Egypt.

Frances Foster teaches at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. Her work straddles the reception of antiquity at two distinct points: reception within late antiquity and within children’s literature. Recently, she has published on the reception of the ancient Egyptian language in late antiquity and on the reception of Hercules in children’s literature.

Abraham I. Fernández Pichel

Universidade de Lisboa

When the Egyptian Gods Ruled the (Future) World: Egypt and Science-Fiction, Dystopic Worlds and Time Travel

In this proposal I present a synthesis of ideas related to some examples of contemporary sci-fi that employ different motifs inspired by ancient Egypt. A fundamental aspect focuses our reflection: the presence of the Egyptian gods as active figures in the development and evolution of future and past worlds. To do so, we will look at different examples taken from comics, cinema and literature.

First of all, I will look at Tim Powers' novel *The Anubis Gates*, which takes us through various time jumps to 19th century England, in a story in which the return of the Egyptian gods of the past becomes the aspiration of certain power-hungry mystical communities. Secondly, the evocation of the ancient gods of the Egyptian pantheon is a central motif of certain narratives in the Marvel comic book series *Moon Knight* and in the beginning of the regular series *God is Dead*. Some of these topics and protagonists also appear, to a lesser extent, in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* and *The Wicked + The Divine*. Of particular interest is the evocation of distinctly Egyptological motifs in the series *Doctor Who*, specifically in the episode 'Pyramids of Mars'. Some narratives concerning the Egyptian religion constitute the main theme of Alex Proyas' film *Gods of Egypt*. Finally, I will mention the *Trilogie Nikopol* comics by the Serbo-French comic author Enki Bilal and his 2004 film version *Immortel (ad vitam)*.

The analysis of all these works allows us to compare the modes of intervention and the models of authority and domination that these Egyptian divinities exercise in worlds beyond their own time and space and in futuristic dystopias. Likewise, the theocracy reflected in these works informs us of the reception of ancient Egypt by authors from different traditions (focusing on fascist tyrannies in the case of Bilal and on secret societies in nineteenth-century England in *The Anubis Gates*), thus leading to obvious analogies with ideas that reveal a reflection of the present with elements taken from ancient Egypt.

Abraham I. Fernández Pichel holds a B.A in History (University of Seville), a B.A in Egyptology and a Master in Ancient History at the Université Lyon II and a PhD in Egyptology at the Universität Tübingen. He was Postdoc researcher at the Centre Franco-Egyptien d'Études des Temples de Karnak (CFEETK, Luxor) and faculty member at the Université Montpellier III from 2017 to 2019. He is currently a contractual faculty member of the Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa (Egyptology). His main field of research is Egyptian religious texts from the Greco-Roman period. He has published several books and articles in international journals (BIFAO, ZÄS, Études et travaux, Aula Orientalis...) and publishers (Harrassowitz Wiesbaden, IFAO...). As a high school teacher for many years in Spain, his interest has also focused on the influence of popular culture on the image and teaching of Ancient Egypt in today's educational models.

Matthieu Götz

Freie Universität Berlin

Ancient Spaces for Future Gods?: On the Semantics of the Sacred in Science Fiction Film

Where are spatial concepts of the supernatural in science fiction film rooted? Since at least the publication of Stanisław Lem's novel *Solaris* in 1961, the potential of science fiction to deal with the numinous was manifest. With the emancipation of science fiction film from trash culture into the domains of mainstream

and arthouse movies since the 70s, examinations of the metaphysical in this genre also became more prevalent. Current series like *Tales from the Loop*, *Raised by Wolves* and *DevS* display variations on how religion and transcendental elements can be amalgamated with science fiction. With film highly dependent on space as a means of narration, it comes as no surprise that concepts of sacred space are used to visualize aspects of a plot. Applying architectural and spatial analysis on set designs, this paper aims to show that these representations of sacred space are not necessarily related to contemporary religious practices, but are often drawn from conceptions of ancient religions, one of these being ancient Egyptian religion.

Matthieu W. Götz studied architecture at Universität Kassel and École d'Architecture Paris-Malaquais and is now a student of Egyptology at Freie Universität Berlin, currently working on his BA thesis on 'The Architecture of the DAM 8-Mastabas in Dabshur'. He has been working as an architect and stage designer, has recently participated in excavations in Qantir-Piramesse as well as in Dabshur and is presently leading a project at the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Abteilung Kairo on the use of virtual and augmented reality in Egyptology. His first Egyptological publication 'Monumentaler Gleiswechsel – Diskussionsbeiträge zur Semantik von Architektur in Ägyptens formativer Phase' will soon be published in A. Verbosek et al. (eds.), Formen kultureller Dynamik: Progression – Impuls – Transformation, Beiträge des zehnten Berliner Arbeitskreises Junge Ägyptologie (BAJA 10) 29.11–01.12.2019, Göttinger Orientforschungen Ägypten.

Isabel Hood

Playing with the Past: *The Box of Delights*

The Box of Delights is a classic English children's fantasy novel. Written and set in the 1930s, it has been adapted many times for a variety of media since. The best remembered version in the UK is probably the BBC TV adaptation in the 1980s. Kay Harker, made temporary guardian of a magical box, seeks to protect the box from the dark forces chasing after it till the box can be reclaimed. He travels back in time to several locations, both mythic and real, briefly including Egypt. However, Egypt is barely mentioned in the original book, with most referencing being far more situated in the likes of English mythology and Classics. This paper looks at how conceptions of the past, and travelling into the past, in *The Box of Delights* (how the past is structured, where it's situated, how you get there and back) have been approached, changed, and up-dated for different productions and times. Works of marginal direct reference to Egypt can usefully be considered as a balancing factor in reception studies to instances of wholesale Egyptomania. Looking at choices made on what is and isn't referenced is interesting in itself.

Isabel Hood is currently trying to tone down her habit of attending more Egyptology, Ancient Near East, and Classics courses, activities and lectures, than more sensible people would consider wise, feasible, or indeed sane. Unlike Kay Harker, her time travel to contemplate the past is far more prosaic, currently being mainly kitchen-based, and involving many time zone conversion calculations for zoom.

Christian Langer

Peking University

Earth History and Interstellar Diversity: The Reception of Ancient Egypt in *Star Trek*

The *Star Trek* franchise has been an object of inquiry in the social sciences for quite a while now thanks to its elaborate and comprehensive vision of an optimistic future of the human species as well as its social

commentary on contemporary issues. At first glance, it may surprise that Egyptology has not yet explored how ancient Egypt is used in the numerous *Star Trek* incarnations. Yet this is understandable since the Egyptian element is much more subdued and less direct than in franchises like *Stargate* or *Battlestar Galactica*. This contribution thus sets out to give an overview of the references to ancient Egypt in *Star Trek*, including a brief general introduction to the world of *Star Trek* as a general frame for the interdisciplinary audience. In a fictional universe, where the deep past and (interstellar) archaeology serve as regular plot devices, ancient Egypt appears on two distinct levels: 1) it forms a part and reference point of Earth history, and 2) it (or rather ancient Egyptian aesthetics) serves as a marker of alienness and supports the cooperative cosmopolitanism of the political project of the ‘United Federation of Planets’ as well as interstellar diversity generally, linking with the wider ideals portrayed in *Star Trek*. Here Egypt works in the micro-scale worldbuilding rather than providing the central point for the series mythology. Next to an outline of such features, the paper also considers postcolonial critiques of the *Star Trek* universe, some of which connect with related critiques of Egyptology.

Christian Langer completed his doctorate in Egyptology at the Free University of Berlin. His research interests revolve around political and social history of pharaonic Egypt as well as the colonial heritage of Egyptology and the reception of ancient Egypt. His publications include the monograph Egyptian Deportations of the Late Bronze Age: A Study in Political Economy (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021 (forthcoming)) and the edited collection Global Egyptology: Negotiations in the Production of Knowledges on Ancient Egypt in Global Contexts (London: Golden House Publications, 2017). As part of his postdoctoral fellowship at Peking University School of Arts, set to commence once the pandemic situation allows, he investigates the adoption and adaptation of obelisks in modern China.

Rita Lucarelli

University of California, Berkeley

A Solar-Ship Voyage: The Ancient Egyptian Religion as Inspiration in the Life and Music of Sun Ra and the Astro-Intergalactic Infinity Arkestra

Presenting himself as an alien coming from Saturn, Sun Ra has been considered a pioneer of Afrofuturism whose music and live performances with his Arkestra are nowadays a classic in African-American jazz music, theater and poetry. Egypt has been a central source of inspiration for this polyhedric artist; this paper will analyze in particular how Sun Ra used and re-interpreted elements of the ancient Egyptian religious culture and its deities in his work and how such contents relate to the development of the Afrofuturistic philosophy within the American climate of political unrest during which he lived and performed.

Rita Lucarelli is currently an Associate Professor of Egyptology at UC Berkeley and Associate Faculty Curator of Egyptology at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology of the University of California, Berkeley and Fellow of the Digital Humanities in Berkeley. She is presently working at a project aiming at realizing 3D models of ancient Egyptian coffins; the magical spells decorating these objects are taken as case-study for investigating the materiality of the text in relation to ancient Egyptian funerary literature. Rita Lucarelli is completing a monograph on demonology in ancient Egypt and she is one of the coordinators of the Ancient Egyptian Demonology Project: <http://www.demonthings.com>.

Sean Manning

Ancient Astronauts Built the Science Fiction of Egypt

Ancient Egypt is undeniably a common theme in the science fiction of the early 21st century, and in its ancestors such as the adventure stories of the late 19th century and the pulp magazines of the interwar period. Yet in the classical form of the genre, the short stories and novels of 1939-1975, it is much less prominent. Many writers of this period were fascinated with pre-Christian antiquity and the diversity of human cultures, but they tended to focus on early Greece, imperial Rome, the Germanic world of the early middle ages, and perhaps China. Jason Colavito famously argued that the ancient aliens theme was popularized by H.P. Lovecraft. And yet the specific Egyptian ancient aliens theme is associated not with a science-fiction writer but with Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods* (1968).

This paper will sketch this absence and then present a theory about why Egyptian themes were less prominent than we might expect in prose science fiction 1939 to 1975. The small, close-knit community of early science fiction rewarded clever engagement with earlier stories, so members could police what counted as proper science fiction. But as science fiction was taken up by the worlds of film and television, it passed into the hands of other communities with other tastemakers. Those Egyptian themes which were successful on the big or little screen became an accepted part of the genre.

Sean Manning grew up on the west coast of Canada. He has a Master's degree in Greek and Roman Studies (Calgary 2013), a PhD in Ancient History and ancient Near Eastern Studies (Innsbruck 2018), and has published one monograph, several scholarly articles, and twenty popular articles. His research focuses on the Achaemenid empire, texts as sources for material culture, and military history. At the age of 24 he knew more dead or retired science fiction and fantasy authors through their writing than living people face-to-face.

Uroš Matić

Austrian Academy of Sciences

Egyptomania, Sex and Ontology in Enki Bilal's *Immortel, ad vitam*

The ontological turn is one of the current debates in philosophy, anthropology and archaeology. One of its central points is that different worlds can be inhabited by different entities and that this has to be taken seriously. Sci-fi is the genre which relies not only on the existence of different, often multiple worlds, but also on different, more often than not, multiple entities. Analysing sci-fi worlds and entities can serve as a thought exercise for analysing different ontologies. This paper will attempt exactly one such exercise by focusing on Egyptomania and sex in Enki Bilal's *Immortel, ad vitam*, the French live action and animated sci-fi movie based on comic books of Enki Bilal *La Foire aux immortels*. The story plays out in New York in 2095 and deals with the problem of the lack of suitable female partner for god Horus who is given seven days on Earth by a council of deities, before he loses his immortality. Horus is searching for a suitable genetically unmodified female partner, but also for equally unmodified male host. Such bodies are hard to find in this futuristic world. Egyptomania, Biblical and New Age motifs are abundant. This paper will argue that *Immortel, ad vitam* not only serves as a case-study of Egyptomania, but that the questions it deals with can be useful for Egyptologists too, for example in considering who were appropriate partners for ancient Egyptian deities from their own perspective and what this can tell us about ontology in ancient Egypt.

Uroš Matić is a research fellow of the Austrian Archaeological Institute (Cairo Branch), Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria. He received his PhD from the Institute for Egyptology and Coptic Studies of the University in Muenster (Germany) in 2017. Since 2012, he has been a team member of several archaeological missions in Egypt (Tell el-Dab'a, Aswan, and Kom Ombo). He was a Co-Chair of Archaeology and Gender in Europe (AGE) community of the European Association of Archaeologists from 2016 to 2019. He is the author of Body and Frames of War in New Kingdom Egypt (2019, Harrassowitz), for which he received two prizes, Ethnic Identities in the Land of the Pharaohs (2020, Cambridge University Press) and Violence and Gender in Ancient Egypt (2021, Routledge).

Owen Morawitz

‘Children of the Gods’: Panspermia, Galactic Diaspora, and Egyptian Deities in *Stargate SC-1*

Beginning with Roland Emmerich’s *Stargate* (1994), the *Stargate* franchise has relied heavily upon the pantheon of ancient Egyptian mythology to generate narrative drama. However, whereas Emmerich’s film only required travel to one distant planet and battle with one villainous ruler, development of Brad Wright and Jonathan Glassner’s television sequel series, *Stargate SG-1* (1997–2007), necessitated a much broader scope of narrative possibilities. This paper will discuss the role played by the deities of the ancient Egyptian pantheon in the first eight seasons of the series, and how their presence combined with theories of ‘panspermia’ and concurrent civilizational development allows *SG-1* to depict a galactic human diaspora. By expanding on the lore and death of the Sun God Ra in the original film, Wright and Glassner utilised the complex system of polytheistic beliefs and rituals surrounding Egyptian mythology to explain the ‘seeding’ of various worlds within the Milky Way Galaxy by hybrid human civilizations, in turn forming the basis for *SG-1*’s narrative superstructure. Gradually, over the following eight seasons, this superstructure would grow to encompass aspects of Norse, Greek, and Roman mythology, along with a blend of religious and hieroglyphic iconography and a pop-culture interpretation of ancient Egyptian culture. While not only a clever and inventive way to reduce production costs, by saving on practical and digital effects budgets, *SG-1*’s unique blend of extensive intergalactic mythology and science fiction elements remains one of the more iconic and enduring instances of ancient Egypt in popular culture.

Owen Morawitz is an Honours graduate of The University of Queensland. He completed a BA (Hons Class I) with majors in English Literature and Philosophy and his work has been featured in Jacaranda and Exordium. His research focuses on violence in narrative fiction and media, alongside issues in continental philosophy, ontology, representation, aesthetics, anthropocentrism, and posthumanism. His Honours thesis deploys speculative realism and object-oriented ontology as a critical framework to analyse acts of violent transgression and the representation of things in author Cormac McCarthy’s novel, Blood Meridian (1985). Additionally, his writing on film, music, media, and alternative culture has been featured in several publications for both print and online.

Kofi Oduro & Mohammad Tarqui Jalloh

ManoPunk: The Fusion of Ancient, Present and Future Civilizations

Ancient Egypt’s relevance has been seen numerous times in works that are in the realm of Afrofuturism, Parallel/Alternative Histories, Space travel and out of place artifacts. In our presentation, we connect these elements of ancient Egypt and science fiction and bring them in line with West African mythologies and stories. By bringing what is ancient Egyptian influence, we can see stories that span across the continent. Due to the nature of our backgrounds, we will have emphasis on Ghanaian and Sierra Leonean mythology and folklore and demonstrate how they can merge to tell stories.

This subject will carry out the links between the two cultures and how the past, present and future can merge in both the current and parallel timelines. The ancient Egyptian aspect is heavily studied, but what about the rest of the continent, the growth, the stories, the paths that have led to other ecosystems that refer to each other for a fully impactful, immersive dialogue, imagery and content?

Mano is a river found in Sierra Leone and is a representation of the constant flow that we see emerge between the different elements that make ancient Egyptian ideologies and artifacts still flowing in our

present and futuristic outlooks. The Punk portion relates to the Afrofuturist mindset with how the flow/journey has ‘punk’ link attributes attached to it. ManoPunk takes these components plus elements from the Rite in Roll Game to explore a digital experience taking in not only poetry as a real time tool but elements from livecoding.

Kofi Oduro (Illestpreacha) is a Creative Coder & Experience Enhancer, who merges an array of media to provide unique experiences that promote discussion, reflection, and interaction. With over 10 years of performance, event production and audiovisual output, he takes inspiration from creative endeavours that are not normally seen together to create a harmonic experience for audience and users alike. His artistic practice is an observation of the world around us that he then put into artworks for others to relate to or disagree with. Through Videography, Poetry and Creative Coding, he tries to highlight the realms of the human performance and the human mind in different scenarios. These situations can be described as social, internal, or even biological, which we face in our everyday lives. Adding music and visuals often helps to perceive one's own feelings, and to highlight the different subtleties that make us human. With a dose of technology, there is an endless range of progress in human creative endeavours.

Mohamed Tarqui Jalloh (#ramblingintellect) is a Sierra Leonean Poet and Spoken Word artist. Intrigued by the genius of words from a tender age, he Co-founded The Village Poetry Collective SL in 2016 for young Sierra Leoneans who are creative in the lingual arts. The Village Collective have since hosted spoken word events in 2016 and 2018. He is also a member of The Sierra Leone Writers Forum, Tok U Tok Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Literacy Club, International African Writers Association and one half of The Preacha Draws The Rambler Speaks; a continuous creative project together with Kofi (Illest Preacha). His Spoken Word album (Eight Six Two Zero: Rhymes and Moods) was released in December 2020.

Rebekka Pabst

Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

Ghost in the Shell: Ancient Egyptian and Modern Conceptions of the Ideal Body in Comparison

The 1989 published manga *Ghost in the Shell* by Masamune Shirow focuses on the ideal connection between man and machine. One of the main characters is Motoko Kusanagi, who has a complete cybernetic body. Only her brain is still human. Thus, according to the interpretation of the story, the strongest characteristics of man and machine are combined. An almost indestructible cybergenetic body as shell and a human mind is, in the manga, called ‘Ghost’. The manga achieved great popularity and since then has been put on screen many times.

Could ancient Egyptian mummies possibly be compared with modern perceptions of cyborgs? On the one hand, the corpse could be furnished with imperishable materials such as gold and silver as part of the mummification process. On the other hand, the brain was removed during mummification. However, the Ba-soul always returned to the preserved body. Furthermore, the heart, which was considered as mind, was given back into the body. Basically, the conceptions of the cyborg and the ancient Egyptian mummy are more similar than one would initially assume. The ghost animates the indestructible body.

The aim of the lecture is to compare ancient Egyptian and modern conceptions of the ideal body on the basis of some ancient Egyptian textual sources and archaeological materials.

Rebekka Pabst studied Egyptology and Economics at the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz. Currently, she is working on her PHD-project entitled ‘The Dead Body. Studies on Concepts of the Corpse in Ancient Egypt at the DFG-funded Research Training Group 1876 “Early Concepts of Humans and Nature”’.

Amir Saffar Perez

Kent State University

Osiris and Anubis in SPACE: Zelazny's *Creatures of Light and Darkness*

An experimental text, *Creatures of Light and Darkness* is Zelazny's attempt at combining Egyptian myth with cosmic science fiction, presenting the conflict of the gods on a multi world scale. The experimental aspect arises from Zelazny moving from different styles without warning, shifting from novel to poem to theater dialogue. While liberties are taken with some of the gods and their relationships therein, Zelazny often uses homages to the classical myth, such as the protagonist Wakim being dismembered limb from limb in a manner similar to Osiris, and the conflict between Horus and Set mirroring the various contests the two gods had. The science fiction arises through the various worlds the characters Horus and Wakim interact with, such as Blis where scientific advancements has prevented death to such a degree that suicide has become an entertainment event. The relationship between death and life is at the heart of the story, with both fantastical and technological methods of immortality are discussed, with the pursuit of immortality itself being considered a natural aspect of life. Life and death are presented in binary code, with the number two being used to replace one, referring to a need for companionship necessary to preserve one's life. And the gods use these relationships to both condemn and save one another. The text captures the bombastic and oftentimes contradictory nature of Egyptian myth and combines it with the similar nature of science fiction to both genres benefit.

Amir Saffar Perez is a Doctoral Candidate. with a Masters in Environmental Engineering and English Literature. He is currently involved in research on recontextualizing pulp characters for modern readers, concentrating on early fantasy and science fiction.

Campbell Price

Manchester Museum

Thundercats: Deploying Ancient Egypt in Children's Science Fiction

The cartoon *Thundercats* (1985-1989) had a seminal influence on my childhood obsession with ancient Egypt. The canid villain Mumm-Ra was the antithesis of the do-gooding Thundercats; a one-time sorcerer-ruler of Third Earth, whose bandage-swathed 'decayed form' lurked within an upright sarcophagus inside an onyx pyramid surrounded by four obelisks. Able to transform – with the help of the 'Ancient Spirits of Evil' – into Mumm-Ra 'the Ever-Living', there are few orientalisng fantasies of Pharaonic Egypt the makers of the show did not choose (consciously or otherwise) to exploit. This paper reviews some of the ways Pharaonic motifs were deployed, within the cultural and political anxieties of the later 1980s.

Campbell Price holds a PhD in Egyptology from the University of Liverpool, where he is now an Honorary Research Fellow. Since 2011, he has been Curator of Egypt and Sudan at Manchester Museum, one of the most significant collections of Egyptian objects in the UK.

Arnaud Quertinmont

Musée royal de Mariemont

Egyptian Hybrids in Cinema and Comics: From Alien Gods to Erotica

In 2016, the Royal Museum of Mariemont (Belgium) inaugurated an exhibition entitled *De Stargate™ aux comics. Les dieux égyptiens dans la culture geek (1975-2015)*. In approaching the world of Egyptian gods in *geek* culture, we wanted to highlight one of the facets of popular Egyptomania over the last forty years and demonstrate that, under an apparent lightness and under the cover of distraction, the productions of this period also provide a wealth of information enabling Egyptian civilisation to continue to live on in the collective imagination.

It soon became apparent that the hybrid deities, in particular Anubis, Bastet and Sekhmet, were a perfect playground for artists to give free their imagination by playing on the monstrous side of a human-animal association. The presence of these hybrids can be significant (use of myth, interactions between characters) or simply a pretext for the theatricalisation of the story. We propose to return briefly to the presence of certain hybrids in science-fiction cinema or in the theory of astronaut gods present in certain comic books.

Arnaud Quertinmont is an Egyptologist who received his doctorate in History, Art and Archaeology from Brussels-Lille. He is Curator of the Egypt / Near East department at the Royal Museum of Mariemont (Belgium), where he has worked since 2006. He curated the exhibitions Gods, Geniuses, Demons in Ancient Egypt, 2016 and From Stargate™ to Comics; Egyptian Gods in Geek Culture (1975-2015), 2016; From Flax and Wool. Egyptian textiles of the 1st millennium, 2019; Made in Belgium. Belgian industrialists in Egypt (1830-1952), 2020. He specialises in the iconography of hybrid deities, in particular canids (Anubis, Oupouaout....).

Nichola Reggiani & Alessia Bovo

University of Parma

The Djed Order: A Case of Egyptian Symbolism in Science-Fiction Movies

While *ankh* – hieroglyph for ‘life’ – is perhaps by far the most renowned Egyptian symbol, occurring as such in several fiction works (novels, movies, comics) involving ancient Egypt, an equally recurring ‘character’ has been largely used, often together and sometimes in contrast with *ankh*, but probably in a less evident manner: *djed*, Osiris’ pillar representing the stability of world’s order. The proposed paper aims at investigating some relevant occurrences of *djed*-symbolism in the most recent and celebrated science-fiction movies, from the *Star Wars* saga (1977-) – where *djed* is perhaps behind the name of the Jedi Order – to *Stargate* (1994) – where *djed* and *ankh* appear in a key place of the eponymous stone portal – to *X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016) – where *djed* is depicted on the stone block used by En-Sabah-Nur’s opponents to destroy his pyramid, which conversely widely exhibits gigantic *ankhs*. The conclusions will take into consideration the role of *djed*-symbolism in the context of the respective plots and in relation to its original Egyptian meaning.

Nicola Reggiani is Research Fellow of Papyrology at the University of Parma, where he is currently conducting projects related to the materiality of ancient Egyptian and Greek medical papyri and to the edition of unpublished papyri from Tebtunis. Among his research focuses, he is

interested also in the modern and contemporary reception of Egyptian wisdom: he published contributions about the ancient Egyptian heritage in L.L. Zamenhof's philosophy of Esperanto and about the Tulli Papyrus, a modern forgery dealing with alleged UFO-sightings in ancient Egypt.

Alessia Bovo collaborates to the Chair of Papyrology at the University of Parma, coordinating and organising seminars, workshops and collective publications, as well as editing unpublished papyri. She collected and edited Italian demoticist Giuseppe Botti's papers. Her main interests currently regard ancient Egyptian medicine, Digital Papyrology, and the history of fashion from Antiquity to today. She is also fondly expert of fantasy and science-fiction movies, and of the citations of ancient Egypt in them.

Thais Rocha de Silva

University of Oxford & University of São Paulo

Ancient Egypt and Colonial Science Fiction: The Myth of Origins

The representation of ancient Egypt in science-fiction movies emphasise its exotic aspects, magic and lost knowledge. The 1970s TV show *Battlestar Galactica* showed ancient Egypt as one of the starting points of civilization, including the pyramids and the temple of Karnak as scenarios for the lost planet Kobol, the home planet of human beings that colonized the galaxy. Many other sci-fi movies used similar references to emphasise Egypt's place in history as the primeval civilization and the realm of a lost legacy. This approach is also repeated in documentaries and schoolbooks and it is a manifestation of a Western colonial type of History. In this paper I explore the historical elements presented in *Battlestar Galactica* as a construct of a historical narrative, one that keeps ancient Egypt as eternal, immutable and mysterious. I challenge this line of thought that puts ancient Egypt as a starting point of a civilizational discourse highlighting the decolonial debates in History and Egyptology.

Thais Rocha is a Research Fellow at Harris Manchester, University of Oxford and a Post-doctoral researcher at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. She is also part of the Amarna Project and her current research focuses on ancient Egyptian settlements during the New Kingdom (1550–1069 BCE), combining archaeological and anthropological approaches to material culture and houses.

Stuart Tyson Smith

University of California, Santa Barbara

Stranger in a Strange Land: Intersections of Egyptology and Science Fiction on the Set of *Stargate*

Little did I know that only two months after receiving my Ph.D., I would be working on a major motion picture, *Stargate*, commenting on the script, consulting on sets and props, and teaching actors how to speak ancient Egyptian. Roland Emmerich's film transformed ancient Egypt into a space-age setting, a futuristic extrapolation of the popular theme of ancient aliens. Unlike more recent films like *The Scorpion King* and *Gods of Egypt*, Emmerich and writer/producer Dean Devlin, with whom I worked closely, were enthusiastic about getting the Egyptological content as accurate as possible outside of the main, von Däniken inspired conceit, in line with the science fiction concept of the suspension of disbelief. This dynamic resulted in a film that both played off of long held popular perceptions of Egypt, including Orientalizing themes and a hyper radical diffusion involving extraterrestrials, while at the same time resonating with scholarly knowledge about language, theology, and power—most notably, but not exclusively, in the reconstruction

of spoken Egyptian. In this paper, I will explore how the interplay between Egyptological consultant and filmmakers, as well as the dynamic of the filmmaking process (indeed a strange land for an Egyptologist), helped to shape the unique character of a film where in spite of the space aliens, or perhaps because of them, language and Egyptological knowledge played a central role.

Stuart Tyson Smith is Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Institute for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He co-directs the UCSB-Purdue University Tombo's expedition to the third cataract of the Nile in Sudanese Nubia. Smith's research centers on the civilizations of ancient Egypt and Nubia with a theoretical focus on the social and ethnic dynamics of colonial encounters and the origins of the Napatan Kushite state, whose rulers became Pharaohs of Egypt's 25th Dynasty. He also applies a postcolonial approach to the Africanity of ancient Egypt and Egyptological bias towards Nubian civilizations. Smith has also consulted on three films, 1994's Stargate, 1999's The Mummy, and 2001's The Mummy Returns, as well as the 2018 streaming production Stargate Origins: Catherine.

Daniel Soliman

Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden

Children of the Hapi: Ancient Egypt and Nubia in Afrofuturistic Music

Since the early 20th century, ancient Egypt and Nubia have inspired intellectual and artistic work in the African diaspora, the decedents of enslaved Africans. African-American intellectuals fighting to improve the social-economic position of their community believed that fostering self-awareness should stand at the basis of real change. They challenged the reductive, Eurocentric and racist historiography of African cultures, and created Afrocentric and Pan-African perspectives on the ancient cultures of the Nile Valley. Egypt and Nubia became great sources of inspiration for art in the African diaspora. By looking at the past, artists strived to inform the present and shape the future.

In music of the African diaspora, this approach famously struck a chord with the Afrofuturistic jazz artist Sun Ra, who in turn inspired contemporary jazz, funk, soul, and rap artists. In their music, album art, performances and music videos, they use imagery from Egypt and Nubia to imagine new worlds, often situated in the future or in outer space. By moving as far away as possible from hardships and inequality in society, they search for spiritual healing on their own terms. Ancient history is often re-imagined, but their critiques of Eurocentric perspectives on ancient history are valuable to archaeologists and curators. Should we use native or Greek names for ancient gods and localities? Are the African aspects of Egypt and Nubia underappreciated? How, and for whom, is history written?

Daniel Soliman is a curator of the Egyptian department at the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (National Museum of Antiquities) in Leiden. He obtained his PhD in Egyptology at Leiden University (2016) and worked as a Postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Copenhagen. In 2018-2019, he was lead curator at the British Museum's Circulating Artefacts project. He is currently preparing an exhibition on ancient Egyptian culture in music from the African diaspora, opening in April 2022.

Matthew Stapleton

University of Central Florida

Ancient Egypt as a Neutral Cultural Commodity in Non-Western Movie Franchises

The ancient Egyptian culture and its mythos has been the subject of a variety of large budget, global films, standing alongside Greco-Roman and Norse mythologies as a pillar of storytelling in these productions. Derived from Kokas (2017), this paper explores the utilization by the film production industry of the Egyptian culture and mythos in the movies *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009) and *X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016). The fetishization of the ancient Egyptian society and its values can be seen in the portrayal of this era, often through the utilization of science fiction tropes like ancient, technologically progressive societies and gods being representative of literal beings or races more advanced than humans. Unlike Greco-Roman and Norse cultures, ancient Egypt can be portrayed as distinctly non-Western by cultural industries, propagating its utilization in works distributed to global audiences. The Chinese market in particular has seen a recent push from large filmmakers due to its novelty and widespread uptake in moviegoers, and Egypt serves as a non-Western way to show a competing superpower. However, the description and display of this culture is often reduced to its most basic terms and tropes, as seen in both listed movies which focus specifically on pyramids, astronomy, and the mummification process. I believe that the continued use of stereotypical ancient Egyptian tropes as a simple backdrop in movies for market appeal diminishes deeper knowledge of the era and mythos, despite the positive outreach and spread of the culture for marketing purposes.

Matt Stapleton is a PhD student at the University of Central Florida studying Texts and Technology in Orlando, Florida. Specializing in culture studies, social media studies, and video game research, he is establishing a strong interdisciplinary focus within cultural industries. Stapleton holds a master's degree in Writing, Rhetoric, and Media from Clemson University as well.

Matt Szafran

Representing Egypt in *The Fifth Element*: Pith Helmets, Hieroglyphs, and Sarcophagi

Luc Besson's 1997 movie *The Fifth Element* is mostly remembered for its bright and flamboyant vision of the 23rd century, and of course Leeloo Dallas and her Multi Pass. However, the 11-minute opening scene takes place in an Egyptian temple in 1914, and touches on virtually all of Hollywood's Egyptian tropes from pyramids to camels to ancient secrets hidden in hieroglyphic inscriptions. It is here that we find a white-bearded European professor and his American draughtsman studying the remote desert temple's hieroglyphic inscriptions, as they try to decipher its ancient secrets warning of great evil and instructing how to save the universe.

The set for the interior of this temple scene was created from scratch for the movie, at Pinewood Studios near London, with the art department clearly being inspired by Egypt monumental sculpture – many of which anachronistic for the time period the temple was supposedly built. This presentation will investigate how the hieroglyphic inscriptions of these monuments have been used and adapted to create a vision of Egypt for the audience, and how other hieroglyphic motifs were completely fabricated to fit the narrative of the movie.

Matt Szafran is an independent researcher, specialising in the study of ancient tools and technologies. His current research focusses on the manufacture and use of stone palettes in Predynastic Egypt, using experimental archaeology and advanced imaging technologies, such as microscopy and Reflectance Transmission Imaging (RTI) to compliment textual studies. Matt has lectured on Predynastic palettes, assisted in the

teaching of RTI workshops, he has published in peer-reviewed journals and magazines, and is currently writing a book discussing the possible uses of Predynastic palettes.

Laura Taronas & Julia Puglisi

Harvard University

Kek, the Ogdoad, and the Alt-Right

On January 6th, 2021, a group of right-wing extremists and Trump supporters stormed the United States Capitol to overturn the election won by now-president Biden. Within this mass, a strange group stuck out from the crowd: The Republic of Kekistan. The fictional country, created by the online forum 4chan, situates its mythological origins in the Hermopolitan Ogdoad. In fact, this community of internet trolls satirically worships the primordial, frog-headed god, Kek ('darkness').

According to Kekistani religion, Kek is an agent of chaos who combats political correctness through 'meme magic', or the ability to make internet memes become reality. Although Kekistan was not initially affiliated with any particular political party, in late 2016 a fringe became associated with Trump's presidential campaign, the alt-right, and white nationalism. As such, the Kekistani flag (modeled after the Nazi war flag) is widely viewed as a hate symbol and commonly appears at far right demonstrations, most notably the 2017 Berkeley Protest for Free Speech, the 2017 Charlottesville Unite the Right rally, and the 2021 Capitol insurrection.

This paper examines how/why an obscure Egyptian deity became the focus of an internet ideology associated with white nationalism. We also seek to understand the influence that the cult of Kek played in radicalizing members of the alt-right who stormed the US Capitol flying the Kekistani flag. In short, this paper reflects on the ways in which ancient ideologies can be used to legitimize new communities, and how this legitimization reinforces ideologies that consequently espouse violence and hate.

Laura Taronas is a Visiting Fellow at Harvard University and a Research Associate at Harvard's Giza Project. She earned her doctorate from Harvard in 2020 with a dissertation that investigated the Amarna Period erasure campaign. In her spare time, she enjoys researching internet culture and politics.

Julia Viani Puglisi is a doctoral student of Egyptology at Harvard University under Dr. Peter Der Manuelian. She is currently researching the development of the Central Field cemetery at Giza during the Old Kingdom. While Puglisi employs computational methodologies in her research, she is equally (and inversely) fascinated with how internet culture reappropriated Egyptian cosmology to validate the origins of online communities.

Julia Troche & Stacy Davidson

Missouri State University & Johnson County Community College

'Luminous beings are we': Force Ghosts and Akhu

What can we learn about ancient Egyptian *akhu* through an analysis of Force Ghosts from *Star Wars*? In this paper, we argue that popular culture and manufactured, real or imagined, realities can help students and researchers explore remote, ancient concepts and practices. From a pedagogical perspective, Science Fiction

universes are often more relatable, accessible, and rounded than our ancient archaeological and textual records. They further promote creative and innovative approaches that expand the types of questions and methodologies used to explore ancient concepts. To make this point, we consider as a case study the *akhu* (ancient Egyptian ‘effective dead’ spirits) in tandem with *Star Wars* Force Ghosts (manifestations of the essence of deceased Force-sensitives).

In our analysis, we focus on evidence for *akhu* dating primarily to the New Kingdom (e.g. letters to the dead and *akb iqr n Ra* stelae) as well as Force Ghosts from Episodes IV-VI, *The Clone Wars*, and *Rebels* animated series. We investigate the processes by which the dead become Force Ghosts and *akhu* respectively and the modes of communication employed by these supernatural entities. Further, we offer novel lines of inquiry that confirm the effectiveness of this exercise.

Stacy Davidson is an Egyptologist and Adjunct Assistant Professor of History at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, KS. She established an Egyptology specialization in the Continuing Education Department at JCCC to further her goal of making Egyptology accessible to any who wish to learn. She is a co-founder and first President of the American Research Center in Egypt, Missouri Chapter (ARCE-MO) and also serves as the Team Lead of the Egyptology State of the Field Project.

Julia Troche holds a PhD in Egyptology, is Assistant Professor of Ancient History at Missouri State University, and serves as co-founder and Vice President of the American Research Center in Egypt, Missouri Chapter. Her book Death, Power, and Apotheosis in Ancient Egypt: The Old and Middle Kingdoms will be published by Cornell University Press at the end of this year.

Katharina Zinn

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

When Nefertiti Met the Dinosaurs on a Spaceship: Alternate Histories as Comfortable Middle Ground for Present Discourses

Dr Who, Series 7, episode 2: The impossible situation of five concurrent time levels as well as the earth / spaceship situation common to the long running SF series *Dr Who* places the Egyptological and cultural icon Nefertiti in a reasonable and seemingly possible narrative in which she can be perceived as an agent, person and also – fictional – example of her time and local culture.

This paper explores if such alternative narratives can foster thinking about ancient Egypt and Egyptology and consequently raise awareness for issues of heritage or if they are simply a way to sell entertainment by using widely known and loved historical subjects (Nefertiti, dinosaurs). This general discourse on reception, presentation and media response will lead to the discussion of one particular example and experience from teaching ancient Egypt to undergraduate students from diverse humanities disciplines. The referred to episode was the starting point for the development of a time travel game in order to understand the history of ancient Egypt. Students are asked to advertise specific periods of ancient Egyptian history to potential time travellers marking the specifics of certain periods and sell as many travel tickets to this period as possible. This entertaining activity lead to historical discussions, connected ancient Egyptian material culture with main stream culture and interestingly was heading into a theoretical discussion of identity, tradition and memory.

Katharina Zinn is Associate Professor in Egyptian Archaeology and Heritage at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Beyond theoretical and interdisciplinary heritage discussions and their application to museums, her research and teaching interests lie in the areas of material culture and materiality (including texts), history, religion, art, gender, identity, museums and memory using ancient Egypt as the civilisation, which provides most of her case studies. Her latest project deals with narratives of tangible and intangible heritage around object biographies of un-provenanced museum objects in Welsh museums which leads to annual pop-up exhibitions involving students.